

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

AFFIDAVIT

1. I, Leonardo Livreri, am a Special Agent (S/A) of the Department of Homeland Security under the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Columbia, South Carolina. I have been a Special Agent with ICE/HSI since October 2006. Previously I was employed as an Immigration Agent for ICE and its predecessor agency, the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) from 2002 to 2006. I am a graduate of the Criminal Justice Training Program and the ICE Special Agent Training Program at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC). In connection with my official duties, I investigate violations of federal law concerning the transport in interstate commerce of individuals seized, abducted, kidnapped and the trafficking of individuals for the purpose of prostitution and forced labor.

2. This affidavit is made in support of a criminal complaint against Bernardino De Jesus RAMIREZ-Ramirez, where there is probable cause to believe RAMIREZ-Ramirez, committed the offense of federal kidnapping in violation of Title 18, United States Code, §§ 1201(a) and 1201(g)(1)(A)&(B).

3. I have participated in the investigation summarized in this affidavit. I am familiar with this investigation based, in part, on personal knowledge derived from my participation in this investigation and, in part, upon information and belief. The sources of my information and belief are oral and written reports about this investigation which have been received, directly or indirectly, from agents, officers, and deputies assisting in the current investigation.

OFFENSES

4. I making this affidavit in support of a Criminal Complaint concerning a federal felony offense for the unlawful seizure, confinement, kidnapping, abduction or carrying away and holding for ransom or reward or otherwise any individual that has not attained the age of eighteen (18) years and transporting said individual in interstate commerce or in furtherance of the commission of the offense, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1201(a)(1) and 1201(g)(1)(A)&(B), hereinafter referred to as the “Target Offense”.

FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

5. On or about October 19, 2022, the United States Border Patrol (USBP) in El Paso, Texas, apprehended a Guatemalan Juvenile Female (GJF) who had crossed the United States/Mexico Border illegally. The GJF provided a DOB of July XX, 2006 and was processed for removal from the United States. The USBP determined the GJF was travelling alone as an unaccompanied alien child.

6. The United States Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), Division of Unaccompanied Children Operations (DUCO) placed the GJF with Youth For Tomorrow (YFT) for housing and medical care. YFT is a residential facility for boy and girls whose lives are in crisis. YFT provides a host of services such as crisis intervention, educational services, diagnostic and assessment services, as well as outpatient services. In or around March 2023, YFT attempted to place the GJF with a family friend named Bernardino De Jesus RAMIREZ-Ramirez who lives at 111 N. Oakley Avenue, Kansas City, MO 64123. The GJF listed RAMIREZ-Ramirez as her sponsor in the United States on her original documentation when she was apprehended by the USBP. YFT was unable to reach anyone at the telephone number

provided. YFT then contacted the next individual GJF listed as a sponsor who was her uncle Ronaldo Perez-Perez. On or about March 31, 2023, YFT was able to speak with Perez and YFT placed the GJF with her uncle at his residence located at 408 O'Neil Street, Newberry, SC 29108.

7. On or about April 5, 2023, Perez contacted law enforcement to report that GJF was missing. Law enforcement responded to 408 O'Neil Street, Newberry, SC 29108 and Perez cooperated with the investigation. Perez advised law enforcement that following GJF's placement with him, GJF's parents contacted her over WhatsApp. GJF's parents had instructed GJF to go with the smuggler to work off the smuggling fee. Perez stated that he objected to this arrangement by the parents. Law enforcement also interviewed the neighbors who advised that an unknown Hispanic male in a Honda van came looking for GJF that day and had asked for her by name. In the presence of law enforcement, Perez contacted GJF's father in Guatemala who again advised that GJF was supposed to go with the smuggler and that Perez was merely a middle person. GJF's father did not know the name of the smuggler who was to pick up GJF.

8. The YFT attempted to contact who they believed to be the original sponsor and had been unable to reach. The YFT called (816)877-3303 and spoke with Bernardino RAMIREZ-Ramirez, who stated he had the GJF, that the GJF was fine and that GJF's parents did not want her speaking with authorities and then terminated the phone call.

9. Cell phone ping records associated with RAMIREZ-Ramirez's phone showed that on or about April 5, 2023, RAMIREZ left Kansas City, traveled to Newberry, SC 29108, and returned to Kansas City. Law enforcement also located an address for RAMIREZ of 111 North Oakley Avenue Kansas City, MO.

10. On April 6, 2023, the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD) observed a Hispanic male outside the residence located at 111 N. Oakley Avenue, Kansas City, MO 64123. When the

KCPD attempted to initiate contact with the Hispanic individual, he tried to run back inside. The KCPD was able to make contact with the Hispanic individual prior to him getting inside the residence and he admitted his real name was Bernardino De Jesus RAMIREZ-Ramirez. RAMIREZ-Ramirez provided the officers with documentation for positive identification. The KCPD requested permission from RAMIREZ-Ramirez to search the residence and RAMIREZ-Ramirez gave law enforcement officers permission to do so. During a search of the residence, officers located the GJF hiding in a bathroom.

11. Law enforcement took custody of GJF and ensured that she did not need medical treatment. GJF speaks Spanish and translator services were utilized. A brief interview was conducted of GJF wherein GJF relayed that she had been staying with her uncle, but was then forced to leave with RAMIREZ due to the outstanding smuggling debt.

12. On April 6, 2023, while the KCPD was at the residence, the Newberry Police department obtained a South Carolina Circuit Court arrest warrant (2023A3620200106) for RAMIREZ-Ramirez for the violation SC Code 16-03-0910 (Kidnapping). The KCPD arrested RAMIREZ-Ramirez pursuant to the arrest warrant issued in Newberry, SC, and was booked into the Jackson County Detention Center in Kansas City, MO.

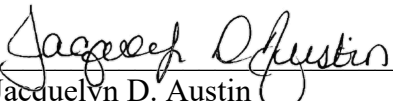
13. Based on all of the foregoing, I, Leonardo Livreri, submit that there is probable cause to conclude that Bernardino De Jesus RAMIREZ-Ramirez unlawfully seized, confined, kidnapped, abducted or carried away and held for ransom or reward or otherwise a juvenile female that had not attained the age of eighteen (18) years and transported this juvenile female in interstate commerce or in furtherance of the commission of the offense, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1201(a)(1) and 1201(g)(1)(A)&(B) and I respectfully ask that the Court issue a warrant ordering the arrest of Bernardino De Jesus RAMIREZ-Ramirez for such violation.

This affidavit has been reviewed by AUSA Carrie Fisher Sherard.

s/Leonardo Livreri
Leonardo Livreri
Special Agent
Homeland Security Investigations

SUBSCRIBED TO AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME via reliable electronic means, that is by telephone in accordance with the requirements of Fed. R.Crim. P.4.1

THIS 24th DAY OF April 2023.



Jacquelyn D. Austin
United States Magistrate Judge
District of South Carolina